

Presented to the Cong. Library,
by Rev. L. W. Elliot.

{ 15.0.7
5645

REV. DR. RICHARDS' DISCOURSE
AT THE FUNERAL OF
MRS. JULIA ANN BALCH.

DISCOURSE

At the *Funeral* of

MRS. JULIA ANN BALCH,

WIFE OF MR. ADNA P. BALCH ;

DELIVERED IN THE

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING HOUSE, AT DARTMOUTH COLLEGE,

HANOVER, N. H., MARCH 26, 1850.

BY REV. JOHN RICHARDS, D. D.

PASTOR.

PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF THE BEREAVED HUSBAND.

PRINTED AT THE HANOVER PRESS.

1850.

Discourse, &c.

BUT THANKS BE TO GOD, WHICH GIVETH US THE VICTORY
THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. 1 Cor. 15 : 57.

“ It is better,” says the wise man, “ to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting ; for that is the end of all men ; and the living will lay it to his heart.” We meet to-day in circumstances very mournful ; let us hope that the tendency adverted to by the royal preacher may be verified in us ; that we the living may indeed lay to heart the voice of God’s providence pointing us to our end. One in life’s best vigor, whose prospects for long life were as fair as the prospects of any other, is arrested in her career and has left us for that world from whence no traveller returns. Who should not ask himself the question, Shall I die next ?

Again, a wife is taken from a fond husband, a mother from children too young to appreciate the greatness of their loss, a daughter from afflicted parents, and a valued friend from a large circle of mourning relatives. We are bound to extend the hand of sympathy, and so far as in our power to administer solace and support. But in such circumstances who does not feel the insufficiency of sympathy and every other earthly consideration, to give effectual sol-

ace and support? And who does not turn instinctively to the higher means that are to be found in the pages of the Holy Word? Such considerations are presented in the chapter from which our text is taken. In the Old Testament the inquiry is raised, "If a man die shall he live again?" meaning, shall he live again in the body? And the question is not so clearly and directly answered as our fond hopes desire. But in the New Testament, and especially in this argument of Paul, that question is clearly and directly answered:— 'Yes, a man shall live again, and in the body which he first inhabited.' Paul was accustomed to preach a Resurrection of the dead, as we learn from his eloquent discourse before Felix — "And have hope towards God that there shall be a Resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust." In the chapter before us, he goes into more particular assertion of this doctrine and a somewhat extended argument to establish it, against certain philosophical objections raised by some in the Corinthian church. They denied a Resurrection because they could not see "how." "But some man will say, *How* are the dead raised up; and with what body do they come?" Paul refutes the objection and closes with the eloquent passage in which the text is found: "For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

The text recognizes a fact, and expresses an exultation.

Death is a formidable evil ;

But there is a victory over it.

I. Death is a formidable evil.

Disguise the matter as we will, Death is the King of Terrors. It is a terrible and a fearful thing, apart from the consequences which unenlightened reason apprehends, or revelation teaches. For, what are its phenomena ? Before, there is motion — the motion of the limbs, the features and the eye : and then, there is the cessation of all these. The hand can no longer caress, the face no more express a smile, nor the tongue assist to utter its articulate tones of sympathy and kind affection. Our friend, with whom we took sweet counsel, can no longer speak to us, and gives no signs of any more consciousness. We call, there is no answer ; we press the hand, there is no response ; we ourselves awake to the reality, that it is death. Death has entered our dwelling — Death has taken away our friend — we shall never see the face of our friend any more in the flesh.

And then the burial. We commit the body to the grave, to moulder there. Such is the power of habit and association, we can hardly separate the thought that it is our friend we are bearing along and shutting up in that narrow cell, instead of the mere tabernacle in which our friend dwelt. Such and so terrible is Death to survivors, when called to part with a friend.

But all these things read to us the terrible lesson of our own exposure and certain doom. We must die — must meet

the same King of Terrors. We must descend the awful path. The gloom, the darkness, the silence, the coldness of the grave must be ours. A pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the light. It seems to us we shall never again behold the light, that has so decked, and colored, and gilded the ten thousand objects we have been conversant with. And none of all who have trodden that pathway ever come back to tell us what sort it is, what the region, and what its objects. The ancient Greeks and Romans did as well as they could when they gave to the soul an unsubstantial form, corresponding in magnitude and outline to the body it inhabited here; when they surrounded it with objects analogous to objects of this upper world. But with all the aids of a lively imagination, they could not divest the subject of gloom. Their Elysium — the abodes of the blessed — was, after all, a gloomy place, compared with the upper world. The ghosts are represented as desiring nothing so much as return to their former abode and their wonted pursuits; so that the whole field of heathen mythology justifies the long established appellation — **KING OF TERRORS.**

And so under the ancient dispensation of the Jews, the light they had on these subjects from revelation was not so clear as to remove from their minds the terror which naturally surrounds Death. We have no doubt that the original revelations made to Adam, and which, though greatly impaired, came down by tradition, were much clearer than those vouchsafed by God to the generations from Moses to Christ. But the revelations in the Old Testament, compared with those of the New, are confessedly dim. In themselves, indeed, they are of great worth; and

were there no other they would be above all price. But their scantiness is such, and their dimness, and the language employed, especially by David in the eighty-eighth Psalm, by Isaiah recording the words of Hezekiah, and by Job, is such, as augments rather than diminishes the terror of Death. "Shall thy loving kindness be declared in the grave? or thy faithfulness in destruction? Shall thy wonders be known in the dark? and thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?" Ps. 88 : 11, 12. "For the grave cannot praise thee; Death cannot celebrate thee: they that go down to the pit cannot hope for thy truth." Is. 38 : 18. "So man lieth down and riseth not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake nor be raised out of their sleep," Job 14 : 12.

Thus, all the appearances are fearful. Reasoning from them alone, we are driven to the dread conclusion, that Death is the end of us; or if perchance the soul survive, are forced to the inference that it is but the beginning of an evil, or series of evils, from which a brave man may well shrink. Do what we will, turn it as we please, Death, relentless Death, is the King of Terrors, until we have the clear teachings of a revelation from heaven. Now, such we have brought to view,

II. In the exultation of the Apostle: "Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

The close of this chapter is one of Paul's remarkable raptures, in which, after presenting a clear and conclusive argument, he becomes glowing and adventurous, from the strong hold the subject had taken of his feelings. No sub-

ject that we can conceive of was more adapted to take strong hold of Paul's feelings than this, — triumph over man's greatest enemy, of course *his* greatest enemy and the greatest enemy of his dear brethren in Christ.

But what is the precise ground of triumph? Not, we apprehend, that the Bible, either Old Testament or New, had revealed immortal life. Prolonged existence simply, nay endless existence, is not a matter of professed revelation. The Bible assumes that, as it does many other truths that are impressed on the mind of man by the nature of his constitution. But it is the assertion of the Resurrection — the Resurrection of the body, on which the Apostle grounds his rapturous apostrophe. This *is* a revelation. This is something beyond the powers of man to know or conceive. That this body which we deposit in the ground, and by know actual observation to moulder away and turn into original elements, should again come forth to new life and strength and beauty, transcendently surpassing what it was before! — this is all out of the reckoning and forecast and comprehension of the unaided human mind. Yet this is what the Apostle asserts in this chapter, this is what all the Apostles preached as a grand peculiarity of the gospel, and this is what they declared Christ preached, having given an earnest by his own Resurrection.

“ For this corruptible (body) must put on incorruption, and this mortal (body) must put on immortality.” And when this shall have taken place, then Death shall be “swallowed up” — clean annihilated — “in victory.” 1 Cor. 15 : 54.

“ Who (Christ) shall change our vile body, that *it* (this

very body) may be fashioned like unto his glorious body," and he shall do it by the power wherewith he is "ABLE TO SUBDUER all things unto himself." Phil. 3 : 21.

"But if the spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also QUICKEN (make alive) your mortal bodies, by his spirit that dwelleth in you." Rom. 8 : 11.

And if we understand the drift of Paul's reasoning in the chapter last quoted, about *the creature* being "delivered from the bondage of corruption," of waiting with earnest expectation "for the manifestation of the sons of God," and of waiting for "the adoption, to wit, the redemption of of the body";— if we do not wholly mistake the drift here, he does teach that this body, which we lay in the grave, shall come forth to unwonted strength, beauty and glory.

We have said that the intimations in the Old Testament on this subject are few and dim, and that often the future life is spoken of in terms of peculiar gloom. If now we were to seek a reason for that gloom which characterizes the language of the eighty-eighth Psalm, of Hezekiah in his sickness, and of Job in certain passages, we should look for it in this : that they regarded, in that language, the state of the soul immediately after death ; what we denominate the intermediate state, the state between Death and the Resurrection. It is out of all bounds of credibility, in our estimation, that the Old Testament does not recognize a Resurrection ; that when Job says, "And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God : whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold and not another ; though my reins be consumed

within me" ; — he does not speak of a Resurrection. And that, when Daniel spoke prophetically, saying, " Many that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt," he did not speak of a literal and real Resurrection of the body, is to us incredible.

But of that intermediate state between Death and the Resurrection, it is freely acknowledged the Bible contains very little in detail ; — the Old Testament, nothing — and in the New Testament, with the exception of Christ's words to the dying thief, " To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise" ; his parable of the rich man and Lazarus, " He was carried by Angels to Abraham's bosom" ; and Paul's declaration to the Philippians, " To die is gain" — with a very few exceptions like these, the New Testament contains almost nothing about that state. These few intimations are enough to sustain our faith, and save us from the despondency that would overwhelm us if we had nothing to expect but an unconscious sleep, perhaps for thousands of years. But we are to remember the ancients had not those precious intimations which Christ and the Apostles have given us. Consequently, when they looked at that long interval in which, for any thing they knew, they should lie in gloom, in forgetfulness, in unconsciousness ; the language they use will not appear unaccountable, while they still believed in a Resurrection in God's own time ; and though the interval were utterly unknown to them.

But while the New Testament writers represent this state as a state of conscious happiness, insomuch that Paul could say, in view of his entrance on it, " I am in a strait

betwixt two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ which is far better," they do place the great burden of their exultation in the Resurrection of the body. This in their view is a promotion, an exaltation in respect to enjoyment and privilege, which is most clearly distinguished from and preferred before the state of separate existence from the body. This union of the soul to its own body is what furnishes to the Apostle his glowing contrasts. "It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory." "Who shall change our *vile* body that it may be fashioned like unto his *glorious* body."

It would be pleasant, did time permit, to inquire so far as analogy and reason would support us, into the particulars in which the Resurrection-body will excel the present feeble and dying structure: to consider how here we are subject to the law of gravitation, and must creep at a slow rate on the surface of this planet; and how the spiritual body in store for us will have no metes and bounds to prevent its free transition through the ethereal fields; how here we need to be restored by frequent sleep from the weariness of a little labor; and how there we shall never grow weary from any cause; how here the daily waste must be repaired by daily increments of food, but there decay and waste shall be unknown; how here the body is a clog and a hindrance to the soul, in the development of its peculiar attributes; but there the body shall be truly a handmaid and help-meet for its spiritual companion, in its noblest aspirations and employments;—no more weakness, no more subservience and yielding of members to unrighteousness, but all in subservience to a holy and a blessed state; with

the assurance of everlasting consecration to him who redeemed it from its weakness, corruption and dishonor.

It would be no unworthy excursion of the imagination, guided by the Pauline spirit, to consider what may be the probable outward circumstances of the soul re-united to the body. For we do not believe that the new heavens and the new earth of John in the Apocalypse, are intended as mere tropes, that are to find hereafter no corresponding realities. We honor the great Chalmers the more, for having the moral courage to say, in the face of prevailing skepticism, that we are instructed to believe there will be there, both solid ground to tread upon, and tangible objects that may be handled, and beautiful sights for the eye to rest upon, and real music that may reach the veritable ear of the spiritual body; and that we are not shut up to the barren prospect of a state all shadowy and dim, and inconceivable from the excess of spiritualization.

And in proportion as we honor such a man for such teachings, do we withhold any meed of praise from such teachers as Swedenborg denying that there are any such realities as time or space, that heaven is or has a place for its population a local habitation. O it is not so that we read Paul the Apostle, consoling his brethren, sustaining both himself and them, amid the trials and despondencies of this dying state. "Death is swallowed up in victory" — by the adoption, to wit, "the redemption of the body." "There is a natural body and there is a spiritual body;" but we do not believe that the spiritual body is to be confounded and identified with the thinking soul, — it will possess its own identity and sustain its own peculiar offices.*

* In respect to the spiritual body, there is a vagueness in the minds

With these views and hopes do we say to the afflicted husband of the deceased — Do not mourn as those who have no hope. We have known her long — as an interested and anxious inquirer concerning these same truths. Yes, before fatal disease had developed itself, and long before she presented herself at the sacramental table to take the vows of the Lord upon her, — long before this, we knew her anxious and inquiring state of mind. And we cannot but believe, that when she at length appeared, to profess Christ before men, it was with a joyful alacrity and a humble confidence, that would not permit her longer to keep away or hold her peace. We understand also how in the steady advances of disease, as one ground of hope after another gave way, her composure in the prospect increased, and she was not agitated in the clear prospect that she could not survive. In short, there is reason to believe that she died the death of the righteous and that her last end was like his ; — that her last sigh in leaving this world and first anthem on entering the world unseen, was Paul's triumphant language — O Grave, where is thy victory ? O Death, where is thy sting ?

Be of good courage, then, Dear Sir, be of a hopeful mind. What you sow now in corruption, shall be raised in incorruption ; what you now sow in weakness shall be raised in

of most Christians which a little reflection might remove. We know of but two substances or essences, matter and mind. There is no third. Mind thinks, matter does not. It is absurd to associate thinking with the 'spiritual body;' as that would confound the two, or make a double person. The spiritual body, then, is matter. Let it be as subtile, impalpable, and impalpable, as any one pleases — let it have the power of penetrating the hardest substances ; as light passes through adamant — still it is matter. The spiritual body is a material body.

power ; what you sow in temporary dishonor shall be raised in enduring glory. God will do more for this *dying* body with which you associated so many endearing thoughts — God shall do more for *that* than you can ask or think. She but awaits the times and seasons which God hath placed in his own power and ken, and she shall awake to a radiance of beauty, an excellence of loveliness, by reason of which the former things shall not come into remembrance — so radiant, so lovely and so glorious shall she be.

It is indeed in anguish that you commit her now for a season to the King of Terrors, and bid adieu to her departed spirit. We would not have it otherwise — but underneath all this, let the waters of consoling hope, of a submissive mind, of a cheerful acquiescence in the divine appointment — let the waters of these wells spring up and take the place of those floods of anguish, which we well know cannot for the present be joyous, but must be grievous. And for this end, seek, O seek for yourself the atoning blood which we believe she sought — seek the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost which she sought, seek *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

My Dear Sir, in an hour like this, how poor and barren are the solaces of the world — how insufficient ! We may now safely appeal to your decision and ask, if they are not poor and insufficient ? Your inmost soul answers, ‘ Yes, they are poor and insufficient.’ Look away then to that better, that enduring country. These tabernacles, as you see, are dissolving — the things of this visible world are shaking, they will all be shaken down, — but there are things which cannot be shaken and which must remain.

O seek these enduring and permanent things. "In my Father's house are many mansions," said Christ — a great house with many rooms — as if a room for each family. How interesting the thought of a whole family being gathered into the same heavenly mansion — husband and wife and all their children, to sit down there after short separations, and welcome each other to joys unspeakable and full of glory — to sing Paul's triumphant song, "Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." And, my Dear Sir, it is for such ends as these — such ultimate, enduring and exceedingly glorious ends — that God sends these afflictions. "Whom the Lord *loveth* he chasteneth, and scourgeth every *Son* whom he receiveth." Let us *endure* the chastening of the Lord and not faint when we are rebuked of him.

To all other mourning friends on this mournful occasion, we tender the same and similar consolations. God is faithful and not cruel in his chastisements, the bowels of his compassion are unfathomable, his mercies higher than the heavens; and through these means he is striving to conduct us to a state immeasurably better than this world can afford. Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest, and fear lest a promise being left us, we should seem to come short of it. There is no true consolation but in the Christian hope. Nothing but this can generate and sustain and perpetuate the triumphant song — "THANKS BE TO GOD WHICH GIVETH US THE VICTORY THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST."

Mrs. JULIA ANN BALCH was a native of Chichester, N. H., born August 5, 1820, the daughter of Mr. Samuel Drake, now a citizen of Hanover. She was married to Mr. ADNA P. BALCH Dec. 23, 1841, and died March 23, 1850, Æ . 30. She left three children, viz :

Helen Augusta, born May 6, 1843,

Frank Kittredge, " Feb. 23, 1845.

Edmund Perkins, " Feb. 1, 1850.

Mrs. Balch was seriously threatened with consumption about a year before she died. With the usual alternations of hope and fear, the disease made steady progress to its consummation. On the Sabbath of Nov. 4, 1849, she made a public profession of religion in the Congregational Church at Dartmouth College. The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is administered here at the close of the morning service. Mrs. Balch being too feeble to attend the morning service came in at its close, stood in the aisle with six others then admitted, assented to the confession and covenant and received the ordinance. This was her last opportunity in the house of God. She had long been an attentive hearer of the word, and for two years before her death had expressed the hope that she was born again.

As this pamphlet is designed only as a memorial to be preserved by friends who need not to be informed of the excellencies of the deceased, the writer forbears to enlarge; only adding his fervent prayer, that they may walk in her praise worthy steps, and attain at length to the Resurrection of the just.

